CONTENTS

Introduction ................................................... xvii

JANUARY

1 Storming Pagan Strongholds ................................. 1
2 Confronting Our Friends ................................. 3
3 Are Animals “Persons”? ................................. 5
4 Miraculous Evidence ..................................... 7
5 Teaching Civility .......................................... 9
6 Turning Human Life into a Commodity .................. 11
7 Are We Abolishing Marriage? ............................ 13
8 Why Men Won’t Commit ................................. 15
9 Should We Be “In on the Kill”? .......................... 17
10 The Language of the Cosmos ......................... 19
11 The Beauty of Character ................................. 21
12 Scientific Evidence for Biblical Truth ................ 23
13 Erecting Barriers to Sin ................................. 25
14 Impressing Secular Cynics .............................. 27
15 The Duty to Disobey ................................. 29
16 The Mother-Child Bond ................................. 31
17 The Truth about the Trinity ............................. 33
18 Loving Our (Urban) Neighbors ......................... 35
19 Is Life “All about Me”? ................................. 37
20 Appreciating Beauty ..................................... 39
21 “It Is Well with My Soul” .............................. 41
22 Creating and Killing .................................... 43
23 The Cosmic Drama ........................................ 45
24 How to Find Happiness .................................. 47
25 Promoting Marketplace Morality ....................... 49
26 Should Children Be “The Ultimate Shopping Experience”? .......................... 51
27 Abusing Our Bodies .................................................. 53
28 A Biblical Vision of Sexuality ....................................... 55
29 Learning to Fear Evil .................................................. 57
30 Have We Adapted to Evil? ............................................ 59
31 Are Human Remains “Art”? ........................................... 61

FEBRUARY
1 Unconventional (Literary) Weapons ................................. 63
2 Wired for Community .................................................. 65
3 Fads in Faith ............................................................... 67
4 Eugenic Nightmares ...................................................... 69
5 Should We Just “Act Naturally”? .................................... 71
6 Parents or Prisons? ...................................................... 73
7 The Woman on the Bus .................................................. 75
8 Fighting Irrational Fears .................................................. 77
9 Creating Real Communities .......................................... 79
10 The Lost Rituals of Courtship ....................................... 81
11 Reversal of Fortune: Christianity versus Islam .................. 83
12 Resisting Unjust Rulers ............................................... 85
13 Darwin’s God ............................................................. 87
14 Of Martyrs and Marshmallows ..................................... 89
15 Guarding God’s Creation .............................................. 91
16 Born or Made? ........................................................... 93
17 Seeking Wisdom ........................................................ 95
18 Faith Attacks ............................................................. 97
19 The Brutality of Divorce ............................................... 99
20 Families and Markets .................................................. 101
21 Praying for the Persecuted .......................................... 103
22 Servant Leadership ..................................................... 105
23 Is Religion an “Obsessional Neurosis”? .......................... 107
24 Genetic Witness ........................................................ 109
25 Melody of Faith ........................................................ 111
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Article Title</th>
<th>Page Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>The Challenge of Wilberforce</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Detestable Art</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Resisting Evil</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Clashing Creation Stories</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Leading by Example</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>God’s Signposts</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Bogus Repentance</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>A Dangerous Correlation</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>The Mainstreaming of Pedophilia</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>“Are We Still “People of the Book”?”</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>The Church behind Bars</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Are Embryos Fully Human?</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Just War and Christian Love</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Preparatio Evangelica</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Fighting Temptation</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Be Not Afraid</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Symphonies to Sorrow</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Sperm Abuse</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Camped at Death’s Door</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Irish Witnesses</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>The Ecology of Liberty</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Emotion versus Truth</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Two Are Better Than One</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Building Communities of Virtue</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>What’s behind Human Nature?</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Seeking Wisdom</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Evidence for the Resurrection</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Demystifying Movie Magic</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Are “the People” Still in Charge?</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Loving Correction</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Lukewarm Commitment</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>How Devoted Dads Point to Christ</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
30  Van Gogh's Starry Witness ................................. 177
31  Courting a Life Mate ........................................ 179

APRIL
1  Shaping Our Culture ................................. 181
2  The Crucifixion of Christ .............................. 183
3  A Sense of the Divine ................................. 185
4  Shutting Out Stimulation .............................. 187
5  Into the Very Presence of God ......................... 189
6  Is Islam Tolerant? ........................................ 191
7  America's Awakening Conscience ..................... 193
8  Evidence for the Exodus ............................... 195
9  The Legacy of Dietrich Bonhoeffer ................. 197
10 Dutch Disaster ............................................. 199
11 Usurping Parental Rights .............................. 201
12 Running from Our Conscience ......................... 203
13 The Halifax Scent Police .............................. 205
14 Overcoming Addiction ................................... 207
15 Can We Communicate with the Dead? .............. 209
16 A Jealous God ............................................. 211
17 The Hillary Ad ............................................. 213
18 Musical Disharmony ..................................... 215
19 Redeeming the Culture through Art ................. 217
20 Babies à la Carte ........................................... 219
21 Does Believing Make It So? ............................ 221
22 Modeling Moral Absolutes ............................. 223
23 Remembering the Persecuted ......................... 225
24 Creating Lasting Relationships ....................... 227
25 Fences for Tearing Down ............................. 229
26 Corroding the Conscience ............................ 231
27 Who Really Gets into Heaven? ....................... 233
28 Faith in the Workplace ................................. 235
29 Restoring Shalom ......................................... 237
30 Why Atheists Reject God ............................. 239
MAY

1 Why We Like Mysteries .......................... 241
2 A Nation of Victims ............................ 243
3 Christ’s “Figurative Fingerprints” .......... 245
4 The Courts’ Assault on Our Children ........ 247
5 The Cold, Utilitarian Calculus ............... 249
6 The Story behind “Amazing Grace” ........... 251
7 SETI and the Search for Design ............... 253
8 China’s Persecuted Church ..................... 255
9 Created in God’s (Inventive) Image ............ 257
10 A Just War Justly Fought ...................... 259
11 The Crime-Fighting Church ................... 261
12 Why We Believe in UFOs ....................... 263
13 Godly Leadership ............................... 265
14 Are Fathers Expendable? ....................... 267
15 Waging Culture Wars ......................... 269
16 The Trauma of Divorce ....................... 271
17 Winning the “Sex War” ......................... 273
18 Responding to the “Last Acceptable Prejudice” .... 275
19 Abortion’s True Costs ......................... 277
20 Mothers and Cultural Messengers ............ 279
21 The War of the Worldviews ................... 281
22 Emotion versus Belief ......................... 283
23 Surprise Converts ............................... 285
24 Life Lessons from People Magazine ........ 287
25 The Siren Call of Mammon .................... 289
26 Who’s in Charge? .............................. 291
27 When Christians Should Disobey .......... 293
28 From Prison to Praise .......................... 295
29 Decay, World-Weariness—and Christ ....... 297
30 Honoring Our Soldiers ....................... 299
31 The Sin of Hubris .............................. 301
JUNE

1  Radical Obedience ........................................... 303
2  Why We Suffer .............................................. 305
3  Speaking the Truth ........................................ 307
4  Men and Postabortion Syndrome ....................... 309
5  Ideology and Worldview ................................ 311
6  A Summons to Gratitude ................................ 313
7  Examining Fads and Fashions in Belief ............... 315
8  Can We Create a “Peaceable Kingdom”? .............. 317
9  Is Nature All There Is? ................................... 319
10 Resisting the Fascination of Evil ....................... 321
11 Who Are the Real Heroes? ............................... 323
12 Mainstreaming Evil ......................................... 325
13 Building Up the Body ..................................... 327
14 Our Christ-Haunted Culture ............................. 329
15 Building a Firm Foundation ............................. 331
16 The Christian Metanarrative ............................ 333
17 Calling Evil by Its Name ................................ 335
18 Crime and Neighborhood Cohesion .................... 337
19 Crime and Punishment .................................... 339
20 Witnessing to the Truth .................................. 341
21 Caesar and Christ ......................................... 343
22 The Gift of Music .......................................... 345
23 The Christianity of Western Art ....................... 347
24 The Myth of Moral Neutrality .......................... 349
25 Preaching “Sermons in Stone” ......................... 351
26 Surrendering to Sacrifice ............................... 353
27 The God Who Invented Time ......................... 355
28 Defective Dating Attitudes .............................. 357
29 Upholding “Emphatic Notions” of Right and Wrong ... 359
30 The Gospel according to Tolkien .................... 361

JULY

1  Sin and Redemption in Science Fiction .............. 363
2 Developing a Passion for Purity .............................. 365
3 Literary Steps toward God ................................. 367
4 Christian Patriotism ........................................ 369
5 Learning Gratitude ....................................... 371
6 Modern Paganism ........................................ 373
7 In Sickness and in Health ................................. 375
8 Patching Up Broken Lives ............................... 377
9 The Loss of Modesty ...................................... 379
10 Do Christians “Deserve” Persecution? ............... 381
11 Why Children Need “Authoritative Communities” .... 383
12 Avoiding “Deceiving Spirits” .......................... 385
13 Breaking the Bondage of Pornography .............. 387
14 Christ’s Offensive Truth Claims ......................... 389
15 Can Faith and Doubt Coexist? ......................... 391
16 Guarding against Privatio ................................ 393
17 Private Virtue and Public Duty ......................... 395
18 Darwin and Morality ...................................... 397
19 Literary Witness ......................................... 399
20 Astronauts Who Found God ............................ 401
21 Is Morality an Illusion? .................................. 403
22 The Sanction of Eros ...................................... 405
23 Art’s Enduring Power ..................................... 407
24 Why Atheists Hate God .................................. 409
25 Fighting Moral Illiteracy ................................. 411
26 Is Gluttony a Right? ...................................... 413
27 The Origins of Evil ........................................ 415
28 Designed for a Purpose ................................. 417
29 The Call to Power ........................................ 419
30 Cruel and Unusual Punishment ......................... 421
31 Putting Away Childish Things ......................... 423

AUGUST
1 No Hospitality ............................................. 425
2 The Morality of Anger .................................... 427
3 Catering to Crudeess ........................................... 429
4 Are Christians Too Credulous? ............................... 431
5 Craving Spiritual Milk ........................................... 433
6 Redeemed by Art .................................................. 435
7 Abusing Our Power .............................................. 437
8 Something Beautiful for God ................................. 439
9 Exploiting the Generation Gap ............................... 441
10 Rituals and Romance ........................................... 443
11 A Dangerous Compromise ..................................... 445
12 Worshipping the God of Technology ....................... 447
13 Biblical Stumbling Blocks ...................................... 449
14 What Makes The Matrix Possible? ......................... 451
15 Fashion’s Ferocious Assault ................................. 453
16 Is Homosexuality Contagious? ............................. 455
17 Smuggled Theology ............................................ 457
18 Keeping Our Vows ............................................. 459
19 Becoming Communal Christians ............................ 461
20 Fighting Off the “Planners and Conditioners” .......... 463
21 The Military Values Gap ....................................... 465
22 Biblical Miracles .................................................. 467
23 Fighting the Enemies of Marriage ......................... 469
24 Counterfeit Conscience ......................................... 471
25 Letting Kids Be Kids ........................................... 473
26 Holy Whodunits ................................................... 475
27 Challenging Scientific Fraud ................................. 477
28 The Limits of Knowledge ....................................... 479
29 Protecting the Moral Ecology ............................... 481
30 The War against Boys ........................................... 483
31 Bogus Belief ...................................................... 485

SEPTEMBER
1 Working-Class Heroes .......................................... 487
2 Worshipping False Gods ...................................... 489
3 The Imitation of Christ .......................................... 491
4 Overcoming Bad Impressions ......................... 493
5 Losing Ground ......................................... 495
6 An Old Error in a New Package .................... 497
7 Funding Faith Efforts ................................. 499
8 A Dose of Prayer ...................................... 501
9 Sick, Twisted People ................................. 503
10 Our Cultural Mandate ............................... 505
11 Healing the Wounds ................................. 507
12 The Rubble Declares the Glory of God .......... 509
13 Star Trek and the Church ........................... 511
14 For Whose Sake? ..................................... 513
15 Balancing Act ......................................... 515
16 Discriminating Christians ........................... 517
17 Balancing the Scales ................................. 519
18 The Enemy Within ................................... 521
19 Ready to Face Death ................................. 523
20 A Realistic Portrait ................................... 525
21 Rules for a Reason .................................... 527
22 Deconstructing Rand McNally .................... 529
23 The Moviegoers ...................................... 531
24 Deliver Us from Evil ................................. 533
25 God in the Closet ..................................... 535
26 Taking Care of Business ............................ 537
27 It's about Time ........................................ 539
28 Loving Our Enemies .................................. 541
29 A Conspiracy of Silence ............................ 543
30 Deceptive Rhetoric ................................... 545

OCTOBER
1 Flat-Earthers ......................................... 547
2 Big Macs and Big Money ............................ 549
3 Who Knows Bezalel? ................................. 551
4 Duh! .................................................... 553
5 Grace for the Straight Path ........................ 555
6 Broken Relationships ........................................ 557
7 Domestic Publicity ........................................ 559
8 Clueless ...................................................... 561
9 The Denial Game .......................................... 563
10 Sorely Needed Wisdom ................................. 565
11 From Skull Basher to Brain Healer .................. 567
12 Hunting Witches .......................................... 569
13 Miami's Bus to Nowhere ................................ 571
14 Black and White and Extinct All Over ............. 573
15 Harry Potter ................................................ 575
16 Where's the Remote? ..................................... 577
17 Me, Myself, and I .......................................... 579
18 Redemptive Reality ....................................... 581
19 Life Imitates Art .......................................... 583
20 In His Steps ................................................ 585
21 The Grand Sez Who ...................................... 587
22 The Passion in Music ...................................... 589
23 Fertility Fairy Tales ....................................... 591
24 England Is Tahiti ......................................... 593
25 Jesus Shall Reign .......................................... 595
26 The Dracula Witness ..................................... 597
27 Bathrobe Gambling ........................................ 599
28 Raymond's Odyssey ..................................... 601
29 A Bulwark Never Failing ............................... 603
30 Worshipping behind Bars .............................. 605
31 Avenging Monsters ....................................... 607

NOVEMBER
1 Summoning Our Courage .............................. 609
2 Why Christians Must Vote ............................ 611
3 A Special Instrument of God ......................... 613
4 Is Anything Really Extra-Christian? ............... 615
5 Standing Your Ground .................................... 617
6 Pretty Stones and Dead Babies ....................... 619
7 Cherishing Our Children ......................... 621
8 The Soul of Scouting ............................... 623
9 Resisting Forbidden Fruit ...................... 625
10 A Biblical View of Work ....................... 627
11 Bonzo Was Right ................................. 629
12 Fighting Historical Vandalism ................ 631
13 The Abuse of Language ....................... 633
14 England's Great Poet-Priest .................. 635
15 Believers in Business ......................... 637
16 Seeking God's Comfort ....................... 639
17 The Route to Self-Esteem ..................... 641
18 Theology and the Trinity ..................... 643
19 Pilgrim Fathers and Kids ..................... 645
20 Digging Out the Truth ......................... 647
21 The Corroboration of Christ ................. 649
22 Challenging Modern Mythmakers ............ 651
23 The Right to Roam .............................. 653
24 Living the Biblical Worldview ................ 655
25 When Art Becomes God ....................... 657
26 Worshipping God with Our Minds .......... 659
27 The Antidote for "Diseased Philosophies" ... 661
28 Twisting Reality ............................... 663
29 Discerning Cultural Trends ................. 665
30 Films of Faith ................................. 667

DECEMBER
1 Tell the Story of the Glory ..................... 669
2 Vulgarians at the Gate ....................... 671
3 The God of Wooden Plows .................... 673
4 The Naked Baby ............................... 675
5 Please Don't Send Me ....................... 677
6 The Poached-Egg Paradox .................... 679
7 Finding Forgiveness at Pearl ............... 681
8 More Than Pretty Music ..................... 683
9 Rational Romance ........................................ 685
10 More Than Duct Tape ................................. 687
11 The Word at Christmas ............................... 689
12 What’s in a Name? .................................. 691
13 Recycled Music ...................................... 693
14 Dangerous Guests .................................. 695
15 Secular Shortfalls .................................. 697
16 Hide and Seek ....................................... 699
17 Makin’ a List, Checkin’ It Twice ................. 701
18 Saving Childhood ................................... 703
19 Jihad for Jesus ....................................... 705
20 Going to the Dogs .................................... 707
21 The First and Only Abolitionists ................. 709
22 A Candle in the Darkness ............................ 711
23 A Revisionist Grinch ................................ 713
24 O Come, All Ye Shoppers ........................... 715
25 A Baby versus the World ............................ 717
26 Syncretistic Services? ............................... 719
27 Should We Have Perfect Bodies? ................. 721
28 Christianity Is Life, Islam Is Death ............... 723
29 Famous for Nothing ................................. 725
30 Respecting Caesar .................................. 727
31 Doing the Right Thing ............................... 729

About the Authors ........................................ 731
Recently the Wilberforce Forum launched an intensive, one-year worldview training program for one hundred serious Christians we named “the Centurions.” Our goal is to teach community leaders from coast to coast to understand, articulate, and live out a biblical worldview and then to teach it to others.

As we worked together, one thing we discovered was the importance of a daily devotional. Theologian and Wilberforce Fellow T. M. Moore writes an online devotional guide exclusively for Centurions that offers a bracing dose of worldview thinking at least once a day. Almost to a person, the Centurions rank it among the most formative influences in their study.

This daily dose of worldview thinking is desperately needed. The biggest single challenge in the church today is helping the faithful understand that the Christian life is about far more than simply attending church on Sundays. And as shocking as this may sound, it’s also about far more than fulfilling the great commission.

Christians are indeed agents of God’s saving grace—instruments of bringing others to Christ. We are also agents of his common grace: He calls us to sustain and renew his creation and defend the created institutions of family and society.

The book of Genesis lays the foundation for this cultural commission. For five days God created the heavens and the earth. On the sixth day he created human beings—and ordered them to pick up where he left off. They were to reflect his image and have dominion, but from then on, the development of the creation would be primarily social and cultural. It would be the work humans performed as they obeyed God’s command to fill and subdue the earth.

The same command binds Christians today. While sin introduced a destructive power into God’s created order, it did not obliterate that
order. When we are redeemed, we are both freed from sin and restored to do what God designed us to do: create culture.

But we cannot fulfill this commission if we do not take religious doctrines seriously, if, in the words of New York Times columnist David Brooks, we “emphasize the upbeat and the encouraging and play down the business of God’s wrath”—in other words, if we practice religion that is easygoing and experiential rather than rigorous and intellectual. Sociologist Alan Wolfe put it bluntly when he said that Christians have become “part of mainstream culture, not dissenters from it.”

Wolfe is right. The church has been mainstreamed (and the culture largely lost) because we have forgotten that God commanded us to love him with all our minds. We have lost the concept of worldview.

How do we get it back? Working with the Centurions has made me realize that the only way to get people thinking differently is to make a huge paradigm shift. We can do this only through regular practice. We cannot simply say one day, “I am going to start thinking differently.” We have to discipline ourselves to think about cultural matters from God’s perspective every single day.

That is the purpose of this book. It offers a disciplined approach to helping you change how you think about art and literature, television and films, politics and bioethics, terrorism—and truth. This devotional is designed to help you learn to think Christianly every day of the year, to apply worldview thinking to the moral dilemmas and difficulties of your own life.

Only when large numbers of Christians begin to think this way—and act on it—will the faithful stop floating lazily along in the mainstream and have the courage to leap into the cold, countercultural rapids. If enough of us take the plunge, the force of the current will inevitably reshape the surrounding culture.

Are you up to the challenge? Then grab your life jacket and turn the page. That first, bracing splash awaits you.

—Charles W. Colson
June 2004
In a culture as hostile to Christianity as ours has become, the church’s impulse may be to circle the wagons and keep strictly to our own kind.

But is this the right response? Should Christians retreat into a new isolationism? Or should we go on the offensive, infiltrating increasingly hostile territory?

In the book of Acts we find Paul as he stands on Mars Hill, disputing with the philosophers of Athens. Acts 17 says that Paul was accosted by Stoics and Epicureans. The Stoics taught that virtue lies in an act of sheer will, not unlike the teaching of modern existentialists.

The Epicureans endorsed a philosophy of eat, drink, and be merry, not unlike today’s consumption-driven pleasure seekers, whose motto is, “Whoever dies with the most toys wins.”

Yet Paul was willing to mingle with these pagans and unbelievers—and to use their own literature in speaking to them. In describing God as the architect of the universe, he echoed a reference to the philosopher Plato. The line “In him we live and move and have our being” was a direct quotation from a Greek poet.

Yet Paul never compromised his message. The climax of his speech was a bold proclamation of the empty tomb—unarguable evidence for Christ’s resurrection.

Some mocked him, Acts tells us, but a few believed. Paul had made a dent in a pagan culture.

Each one of us has our own opportunities to mingle with non-
believers and engage their hearts and minds. For you, it might be a neighborhood association, a PTA, or a workstation.

What matters is not where we speak but what we say.

This is no time to circle the wagons, no time to be faint of heart. It is time to storm the strongholds of pagan America.

Father, I ask for the courage to befriend those around me who may be hostile to Christianity. Help me to find ways to recast the eternal message of salvation in language they will understand.
One of the best ways we can teach our kids about the value of friendship is by dusting off the best works of children’s literature, like Kenneth Grahame’s classic, *The Wind in the Willows*. It tells a charming story about a mole who leaves his underground home in the English countryside and makes friends with a water rat. Through his new friendship, Mole discovers a fascinating new world, populated by Badger and Otter and Toad and a host of other colorful animal characters.

*The Wind in the Willows* was one of C. S. Lewis’s favorite children’s books—and it’s safe to say he knew something about the subject. Vigen Guroian, author of *Tending the Heart of Virtue*, says the story shows “how friendships can form us into stronger and more integrated persons. . . . Mole is called out of his womb-like home to become a friend to others,” and his character develops precisely through learning to be a loyal and giving friend. To quote Guroian again, “Modern psychology confirms that common stock of human wisdom which says that children ought to have friends, and not just any friends, but [ones] with real virtues that in combination contribute to the moral growth of all the friends.”

And when children go astray, it is often their friends who call them to accountability. In *The Wind in the Willows*, Toad suffers from uncontrolable appetites that threaten his own destruction. He is lucky to have friends who love him enough to act severely with his weaknesses.
Led by the tough-minded but loving Badger, they confront Toad about his excesses and fight off the vicious stoats (ermines) and weasels who have taken advantage of him. What else are friends for?

The view of friendship that Kenneth Grahame expresses in story form comes from ancient times. It was the Greek philosopher Aristotle who wrote that friendship “helps the young to keep from error; . . . [and] those in the prime of life it stimulates to noble actions . . . for with friends men are more able to think and to act.” Even more important, friendship reminds us that in Christ, God himself has called us his friends. As Guroian writes, “Friendships sound the call to a higher and transcendent communion with God.”

Why not introduce the children in your life to a hero who is not afraid to be a friend—one like Badger, who helps his friend Toad conquer the demons within. And we ourselves must remember that we have an obligation to our own friends to call them to accountability when we see them falling into sin—and to be open to the loving rebukes of friends who are concerned about our moral character.

Lord, help me not to fall into friendships that degrade my moral growth. Give me the wisdom to choose friends whose characters inspire me to follow you more closely—friends who love me enough to risk my wrath to offer necessary rebukes.
ARE ANIMALS “PERSONS”?

TO READ: GENESIS 1:24-26

God said, “Let us make man in our image . . . and let them rule over . . . all the creatures.” Genesis 1:26

Not long ago the California Milk Advisory Board ran what became known as the “happy cows” television ad. It featured singing, wisecracking dairy cows contentedly munching grass in bucolic bliss. Viewers loved them, but the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) sued, claiming that the ads violated consumer protection laws. How? According to PETA, the ads deceive consumers about the way cows actually live. (Note to PETA: Cows don’t really sing, either.)

PETA also got upset over the “Chicken Challenge” at an Illinois casino, where customers were invited to play tic-tac-toe against chickens. PETA said the game “disrespected chickens.”

We laugh at stories like these, but the influence of animal-rights advocates has been growing, and their agenda is dangerous. Americans and Europeans alike are passing laws that do more than just protect animals. In Germany, for example, a law was passed declaring that animals have the same rights as humans.

Some changes in how animals are treated on farms and in labs may be needed. But the modern animal-rights movement is driven by more than just humane concerns; activists have a serious agenda—one that challenges Christianity’s most fundamental doctrines.

Animal-rights activists believe there is no fundamental difference between animals and humans. The idea that humans are special in any way is called speciesism, defined as a prejudice akin to racism and sexism. PETA’s Ingrid Newkirk even compares eating meat to the
Nazi Holocaust and says that the animal rights movement is “at great odds” with Christian teachings.

Ominously, some animal-rights activists carry their logic to extremes. If it’s “murder” to kill chickens, they believe, then it’s morally acceptable to stop the “murderer.” In National Review Online, Wesley Smith writes about terrorists who employ “death threats, fire bombings, and violent assaults against those they accuse of abusing animals.”

These people are dangerous in more ways than one. Charles Oliver of Reason magazine explains: “By placing chickens and Jews on the same ethical plane, animal rights activists may inadvertently make it easier for a future Hitler to herd millions of humans into gas chambers.”

Oliver is right. The philosophy behind the animal-rights agenda is an assault on human dignity. Christians have a moral duty to respect the animal world as God’s handiwork. This means finding out how animals are treated in research labs and on factory farms and helping shape laws that determine their treatment. We must make sure we and others treat animals “with the mercy of our Maker,” as Christian writer Matthew Scully writes in his book Dominion: The Power of Man, the Suffering of Animals, and the Call to Mercy.

But mercy for animals is completely different from rights for animals—and we should never confuse the two.

Lord, teach me to be concerned enough about animal suffering to ensure that I am not contributing to it. Grant me a heart that beats with the mercy that the Creator has for his creatures.
In *An Anthropologist on Mars*, Oliver Sacks describes the case of a man named Virgil, who had been blind since childhood. At the age of fifty, Virgil underwent surgery to restore his sight.

What he experienced afterward inadvertently confirmed the Bible’s account of one of Jesus’ miracles.

Following the surgery, Virgil suffered from what is called “post-blind syndrome”—the inability to make sense of the panorama of colors and shapes that crowd our field of vision. As Sacks writes, Virgil would “pick up details . . . an angle, an edge, a color, a movement—but he would not be able to synthesize them, to form a complex perception at a glance.” For example, when looking at a cat, Virgil “would see a paw, the nose, the tail, an ear, but he couldn’t . . . see the cat as a whole.”

It took time and practice, but Virgil finally adjusted to being sighted. As his wife put it, “Virgil finally put a tree together—he now knows that the trunk and leaves go together to form a complete unit.”

These words ought to ring a bell for Christians. In the Gospel of Mark, we read that Jesus led a blind man “outside the village. When he had spit on the man’s eyes and put his hands on him, Jesus asked, ‘Do you see anything?’” The blind man replied, “I see people; they look like trees walking around” (Mark 8:23-24).

As Keith Mano writes in *National Review*, this phrase “is a clinical description. Like Virgil, the Bethsaida man can now see, but he cannot yet make sense of what he is seeing. Tree and man run together, as did trunk and tree-top for Virgil.”
In short, “this is irrefutable evidence that a miracle did occur at Bethsaida... No [charlatan] in the crowd could have faked it all by pretending to be blind because only someone recently given his sight” would see people who, according to Mark, “look like trees walking around.” Mano concludes, “A faker, not knowing about post-blind syndrome, would have reported that Jesus had given him perfect vision.”

Instead, the Gospel reports that Jesus cured the man twice: once of blindness and then of post-blind syndrome.

The story of the blind man’s miraculous healing could not be understood until our own day, when modern medicine has revealed the true nature of blindness.

Do you have trouble believing in the miracles of Christ? Do your friends? If so, read the fascinating story of the two men who were healed of their blindness—both of whom saw people who “look like trees walking around.”

*Lord, thank you for modern medicine that offers testimony to ancient miracles.*
There’s a modern-day “punishment room” that many lawbreakers fear and hate—and some would say violates laws forbidding cruel and unusual punishment.

But the judge who sends people to this ersatz torture chamber says he’s only making the punishment fit the crime.

Municipal Court Judge Paul Sacco of Fort Lupton, Colorado, got tired of complaints from senior citizens about teenagers driving through their neighborhoods with boom boxes blasting loudly enough to wake the dead. So the judge came up with an original—and appropriate—penalty. Kids who violate the noise ordinance are locked in a room at the courthouse and are forced to listen to the worst music imaginable—at least to the ears of rap-loving teenagers.

One recent batch of scofflaws was shut up with the sound of Roy Rogers and Dale Evans warbling “Happy Trails to You.” They suffered through Disney tunes, bagpipe music, and songs by Wayne Newton and Barry Manilow. But the teens were nearly driven mad hearing Tony Orlando and Dawn sing “Tie a Yellow Ribbon Round the Old Oak Tree” and Dean Martin crooning “The Middle of the Night Is My Cryin’ Time.”

The treatment is unorthodox—but extremely effective. Seventeen-year-old David Mascarenas says he’s already taken his stereo out of his car. And not one survivor of this punishing ordeal has ever reappeared before Judge Sacco.

This judge may be onto a good thing. It’s clear that for these kids
the more informal channels of teaching civility—the home, the school, and the church—have failed. When that happens, the heavy hand of the law must take over. But instead of taking a punishing approach, Judge Sacco has opted for a teaching approach. He’s helping these kids understand why laws of civility and courtesy exist in the first place.

The result is that they’re learning firsthand the most universal moral code: Do unto others what you would have others do unto you.

This is a lesson in civility we all ought to take note of at a time when we Americans are encouraged to think too much of our own rights and not enough about the rights of our neighbors.

It’s a lesson that dozens of Colorado kids won’t soon forget—kids who still shudder at the memory of the day they were forced to listen to Roger Whitaker and Dean Martin.

As one teenager put it, “If I ever get caught again, I’d rather pay the sixty-five dollars.” But I’m sure he—and his neighbors—benefited much more from a musical lesson in courtesy.

Lord, as I go into the world today, illuminate ways in which I routinely put my own “rights” ahead of courtesy, compassion, and consideration for others. Help me daily to conquer every selfish impulse as I interact with people in my office, on the road, in my neighborhood, and in my home.
A graduate student at New York University’s film school, Carrie Specht, was borrowing money daily just to buy food. But rather than take another low-paying job, Carrie signed on with an infertility clinic to sell her eggs to an infertile couple.

It’s the latest trend among college coeds—a trend that could change the very definition of what it means to be human.

Carrie had held a series of low-paying jobs, such as dog walking, before spotting an ad in the *Village Voice*. A clinic called Advanced Fertility Services invited “healthy, caring women” to assist infertile couples, and it offered two thousand dollars to cover “time and inconvenience.”

It turned out the clinic was looking for women willing to let doctors harvest their eggs and sell them to infertile couples.

Carrie had her eggs harvested four times. They were fertilized and implanted in the wombs of anonymous recipients. Carrie has used the money—some eight thousand dollars—to pay tuition and finance film projects.

Dr. Mark Sauer, director of an assisted-reproduction program, says the average donor is a college student who is “clearly doing this because of the financial gain.” But what are the ethical issues involved in the sale of human eggs?

For example, in some states there is no limit to how many times a woman may donate eggs. But what happens if two people spawned
from the same donor should meet and marry? It could be a genetic
disaster if they had children.

Perhaps worst of all is what egg harvesting teaches women about
their own worth. In an article in *Jane* magazine called “Chicks Selling
Their Eggs,” a young woman named Martha said, “It occurred to me
that they were going to pay me money for something I wasn’t ever go-
ing to use.”

What we’re seeing here is the triumph of a completely mechanistic
view of human life. The human body is regarded not as a gift from
God but as a purely physical object to be taken apart, sold, and used—
just like any other physical object. Human eggs are regarded merely as
a commodity.

In *Without Moral Limits* Debra Evans writes, “Women are not ma-
chines of reproduction, but are each unique, individual persons in
body, mind and spirit.” She’s right. Genesis says we are made in the
image of God—that we find our ultimate identity and worth in re-
reflecting our Creator.

You may never be asked to sell off part of your own body—but you
are almost certainly hearing arguments demanding that you accept a
redefinition of what it means to be human, whether the subject is
abortion, cloning, or selling human eggs. Are you prepared to make
the biblical case against the commodification of human life?

*Lord, open my eyes to cultural changes that defy your teachings. Give me oppor-
tunities to share these teachings with those who are being dangerously misled
into believing that your gift of life is something to be sold to the highest bidder.*
The moment Michelle Meako became engaged, she told her intended, “I want a big wedding.” The couple wrote their own vows, picked out a cake, and planned a Canadian honeymoon. The couple omitted only one detail: a marriage license. They couldn’t get one because Michelle and her “spouse” are both women.

Is it unjust for a government to refuse to authorize same-sex “marriages”?

In The Clash of Orthodoxies, Princeton philosopher Robert George writes that the matrimonial law reflects a moral judgment: that marriage is inherently heterosexual, monogamous, and permanent—a union of one man and one woman. This judgment is based on both the biblical and natural law understandings that marriage is a two-in-one-flesh communion of persons. This communion is consummated and actualized sexually—that is, by acts that are reproductive, whether or not they result in children. They unite the spouses as a single procreative unit—an organic unity achieved even by infertile couples. Only a mated pair can be a complete organism capable of human procreation.

By contrast, homosexual acts have no relationship to procreation and can’t unite persons organically. As a result, these acts can’t be marital—which means relationships integrated around them can’t be marriages. Same-sex partners are physically incapable of marriage. It takes a man and a woman to become “one flesh.”
“Okay,” our secular neighbors may say, “that’s your definition of marriage. But why should you be allowed to impose your views on everyone else?”

That’s why we have to be ready with additional, nonreligious arguments for traditional marriage. For instance, if we expand the meaning of marriage to include same-sex unions, on what grounds could we legitimately oppose marriages of three or more people, or weddings between siblings?

Another argument, made by Bill Bennett, is the impact it would have on the shaping of human sexuality, especially among the young. “Societal indifference,” he writes, “about heterosexuality and homosexuality would cause a lot of [sexual] confusion.”

Since the beginning of recorded history, virtually every society and every major religion has revered and protected traditional marriage. It’s the institution that nurtures, protects, and civilizes children. Marriage forms the framework of society’s most basic institution: the family.

If supporters of same-sex marriage succeed, marriage will be reduced to nothing more than a legal contract between any two people based solely on feelings. True marriage would be abolished, and the damage to our society would be irreparable.

We Christians are often made to feel “intolerant” for not going along on issues like same-sex “marriage.” When others try to intimidate us into silence through the “bigot” label, we need to speak out—to explain why same-sex “marriage” is impossible and how attempts to impose it will harm us all.

Lord, give me the courage to be salt and light in the world and to speak up for your truth, regardless of the consequences.
Tina wants to get married, but her boyfriend, Ted, just wants to move in. Ted is an exceptionally honest young man, so here is what he says: “Tina, I’m fond of you, and I want to live with you for the following reasons. First, it will make it easier for me to enjoy regular sex. Second, I want to protect my assets—assets I’d have to share with you if we got a divorce. Third, you already have kids, and I don’t want to support them. Fourth, I’m waiting for my perfect soul mate to come along. Until I meet her, I’d like to live with you.”

Ted’s arguments are incredibly insulting. And yet, according to a new study, these are exactly the reasons men want to live with women—reasons that not only insult women, but also make them big losers on the domestic front.

Researchers with the National Marriage Project at Rutgers University have published a report called Why Men Won’t Commit: Exploring Young Men’s Attitudes about Sex, Dating, and Marriage. It offers the top ten reasons men are reluctant to say, “I do.” Among them: They can get all the sex they want without marriage. They want to avoid the financial pitfalls of divorce. And they’re afraid marriage will demand too many changes and compromises. Apparently, their live-in girlfriends can get used to their bad habits or leave.

Most galling of all is men’s admission that they’re waiting for their “true love” to come along. Then they’ll tie the knot, buy a home, and father kids. Meanwhile, their live-ins can pick up their socks and provide sex on demand.
Grandma was right. Men won’t buy the cow if they can get the milk free. Grandma was echoing the wisdom of the biblical writers. Read the Old Testament, and you’ll get a picture of how carefully the ancient Israelites protected unmarried women: They knew how predatory, how utterly selfish, men can be. Taking on the responsibilities of a wife and children involved hard work that would last a lifetime. And men were motivated to shoulder those responsibilities only because their culture demanded it.

Modern women have far more freedom of movement than their sisters in the ancient world did. But human nature is still fallen. This means that men are as predatory as ever—and women today are paying the price for it in a culture that doesn’t demand marriage.

The sad truth is that nearly everyone suffers from an inclination to be selfish. We need to become fully aware of relationships in which we ourselves are tempted to put our own desires above the good of others simply because we know we can “get away with it.”

*O God, teach me to put generosity ahead of getting my own way, remembering that Jesus was tempted by Satan to put him first—but chose instead to sacrifice himself for the sake of all mankind.*